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rately sane does not easily understand that the exposition of the Scriptures is to be sought for from those who profess to be the teachers of them?" (44) So, in like manner, the ancient Fathers and Doctors are continually appealed to and cited in the writings of the standard divines of the Church of England, as well as in the Book of Homilies which she has authorized; not indeed as an authority co-ordinate with Holy Scripture, but as a help to determine the right interpretation thereof in passages which need illustration in any of the points of view above noticed (45).

It is not necessary to consider in detail the proofs alleged by Roman Catholics in reference to the difficulties and obscurities of Scripture. The general answer above given is quite sufficient to obviate any objection to the Protestant Rule of Faith derived from this source. We will, however, conclude this article with a remark on the passage of St. Peter, above referred to—2 Pet. iii. 16. If there was then, or if it were intended that there should subsequently be, an infallible authority, to which the faithful might appeal, in order to clear up those things "hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable wrest to their own destruction," surely here was a most fitting place to mention it; especially as, according to the Roman Catholic theory, the successors of St. Peter himself (the writer of these words) were to be the chief, if not the sole, depositaries of this infallible authority. But the Apostle does not give the remotest hint of any such thing. The only safeguard from error which he points out is one which not only every man may obtain without the interposition of any human agency external to himself, but which excludes the very possibility of such interposition—"You, therefore, brethren, knowing these things before, take heed lest, being led aside by the error of the unwise, you fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."—Verses 17, 18. The safeguard recommended by St. Peter is cautious vigilance, with growth in grace and in the knowledge of Christ; not an appeal to a visible, living, infallible interpreter. The consideration of the remaining arguments in favour of a double Rule of Faith we must reserve to a future occasion.

#### TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Mr. Power's letter, Mr. Collette's, Philalethes's, and several other valuable communications, are necessarily postponed till our next, for want of room.

All letters to be addressed to the Editor, 9, Upper Sackville-st. No anonymous letter can be attended to. Whatever is sent for insertion must be authenticated by the name and address of the writer, not necessarily for publication, but as a guarantee for his good faith.

We would request our valued correspondents, both Roman Catholics and Protestants, to limit the length of their communications, and not to discuss a variety of distinct topics in one letter.

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## The Catholic Layman.

DUBLIN, FEBRUARY, 1853.

#### CIVIL AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.

THERE is nothing more deservedly precious to mankind than liberty. We do not understand by liberty, as some do, the power of tyrannizing over others. We mean that well-regulated liberty which secures to every man the right of independent action, while respecting the rights of others; the right of every man to think, uncontrolled by others; the right of every man to have a free

conscience towards God. This is our notion of "civil and religious liberty."

In proportion as this is valuable to men, they ought to stand on their guard against all who claim a right to deprive them of this liberty.

We do not consider it a question whether the Pope possesses power to deprive men of civil and religious liberty. We are sure that all our Roman Catholic readers hold, as we do ourselves, that the Pope has no such power. We think it false and unjust to say that Roman Catholics are slaves, or that they are ready to yield up their civil and religious liberty to the Pope. So far as they submit to the Pope, out of conviction, they are acting freely; and we have no right to suppose that they are ready to submit to him farther than conviction leads them.

But it is often made a question *whether the Pope claims* for himself a power of forcing the actions and the consciences of men, against their own convictions. If he do make such a claim, all who value civil and religious liberty should stand on their guard against it.

Whether the Pope do really make such a claim, is a question that should be calmly and candidly considered; and we propose dispassionately to review what is said on both sides.

One side points to the Bull in which Pope Pius V. excommunicated and deposed Queen Elizabeth of England. We have only room to quote one sentence—"We likewise declare the said Elizabeth deprived of the pretended right to the kingdom above mentioned, and of all dominion, dignity, and privileges whatsoever; and that all the nobility and subjects of the said realm, who have sworn to her in any manner whatsoever, are for ever absolved from any such oath, and from all obligation of fidelity and allegiance. . . .

We likewise command all the nobility, subjects, and others above mentioned, that they do not presume to obey her orders, commands, or laws, for the future; and those who act otherwise are involved in the same sentence of excommunication."—Sanders de Schismate Anglicano, p. 423. Now, whereas the Pope, in his Bull, claims to do this in virtue of the authority committed to him by God, these persons consider this a clear claim on his part to overthrow men's civil rights and liberties.

These persons also appeal to the canon law (Decret. Greg. IX., book V., title VII., ch. 13), which gives the Pope power to compel all temporal princes to take an oath to exterminate heretics from their dominions. They appeal to Roman Catholic historians, that this was actually carried into effect by the extermination of a hundred thousand Albigenses and Waldenses in various countries; they appeal to the fact, that this law stands yet unrepealed, in the canon law of Rome, at this day; and they observe, which is certainly of great importance, that this is not only a part of their law, but it is actually a decree of a Pope (Innocent III.), and also a general council (Lateran IV.), acting together with the Pope: and since all Roman Catholics hold a decree of a Pope and a general council together to be infallible, they hold that this decree, being infallible, must also be unchangeable.

Now, these are weighty arguments; for all the facts stated here are certainly true. Yet, we ought candidly to consider what Roman Catholics say on the other side. And we believe their answer is generally this:—That Roman Catholics, at the present day, do not admit or believe in any such power of the Pope; that if Pope Pius IX. should now attempt to treat Queen Victoria as Pius V. treated Queen Elizabeth, they would think themselves bound to disobey the Pope, and to obey the Queen; and in like manner they say, if he should now order them to exterminate heretics, they should think themselves bound to disobey him. They say that their own conscience tells them that these things are wrong,

and that they would not believe that such things are right, even on infallible authority.

Now, we are satisfied that this is generally true of Roman Catholics at the present day, though it was not so formerly; and we are quite sure that it is true of all our readers. We only ask those who say this to observe, that since Popes and general councils have claimed to possess spiritual authority from God to do these things, it is clear that their claim to spiritual authority is not to be admitted, unless it can stand the test of truth and reason. And, to be consistent, they should admit no such claim, unless it can stand this test. It is clear that Popes and general councils are not sufficient witnesses themselves for the extent of their own powers. Infallible as they may be, they may claim, and have claimed, powers that were never given to them—powers that it is blasphemous and wicked to claim, as being given to them by God.

But all this, while it is a very sufficient answer as to what Roman Catholics believe, is no answer as to *what the Pope claims*. So, then, Roman Catholics only say that the Pope does not, in fact, now claim any power of interfering with men's civil and religious liberty. We have never heard Roman Catholics offer any *proof* of this—they only *say* it; and, with all respect to them, we think it possible that they may be mistaken. If they could show us that any Pope has ever *disclaimed* the power which his predecessors *claimed and exercised*, this would be conclusive with us; but we do not know of any such disclaimer having been produced, though, certainly, it is called for, while the Pope's canon law stands as it does.

Now, we have met with a document lately which seems to us to settle the question. It is an "allocation" by the present Pope, given in Consistory, dated September 27, 1852, published in the *Tablet* newspaper of November 6. It relates to the affairs of the republic of New Grenada, on the isthmus which connects North and South America. The following extracts will show what kind of laws the Pope complains of:—The Pope says that the Holy See had strongly remonstrated against a proposed law, "that emigrants to that country might have the public exercise of their worship, whatever it was; and, disapproving of the above decrees, has again and again insisted, that they should never be ratified." And a little further on he says—"Nor must we pass over in silence that, by the new constitution of that republic, enacted, in these recent times, among other things, the RIGHT ALSO OF FREE EDUCATION is defended, and liberty of all kinds is given unto all, so that each person may even PRINT and PUBLISH HIS THOUGHTS, and all kinds of monstrous portents of opinion, AND PROFESS PRIVATELY and PUBLICLY WHATEVER WORSHIP HE PLEASES." And on this the Pope observes, to the college of Cardinals whom he addressed—"You assuredly see, venerable brothers, how horrible and sacrilegious a war is proclaimed against the Catholic Church, by the rulers of the republic of New Grenada."

So, if the civil government of a country establishes by law the great bulwarks of civil and religious liberty, FREEDOM OF EDUCATION, LIBERTY OF THE PRESS, and the RIGHT OF WORSHIP according to each man's conscience, the Pope considers that "a sacrilegious war" against his authority!

And mark how he fights in such a war. Towards the end of the allocation he says—"We, raising, with Apostolic liberty, our pastoral voice in this your most illustrious assembly, do censure, condemn, and DECLARE UTTERLY NULL AND VOID all the aforesaid decrees, which have been there enacted by the civil power."

That is, when the civil power in a country passes laws that education and the press shall be free, and every man shall be left to worship God

(44) Quis, enim, mediocriter sanus non facile intelligat Scripturarum expositionem iis petendam esse, qui earum doctores se esse profitentur?—August. de Morib. Eccles. cap. i.

(45) In the Code of Canons passed by the English Convocation, in 1571, the following rule is prescribed to the clergy, in reference to their sermons, from which it appears how highly our Church estimates the value of Christian antiquity as an auxiliary in the interpretation of Scripture:—"But especially they [preachers] shall take heed that they deliver nothing from the pulpit, to be religiously held and believed by the people, but what is agreeable to the doctrine of the Old or New Testaments, and which the Catholic Fathers and ancient bishops have collected out of that very doctrine."—Cardwell, Synodal. I. 126.

according to his own conscience, the Pope claims a right to repeal those laws by his own pastoral authority.

This is decisive as to what *pastoral* authority the Pope claims. If he do not try to exercise it in this country at present, it is not because he thinks it wrong for him to claim it, but only because it might not be prudent; but, through Dr. Cullen and the Synod of Thurles, he may prepare the way for it; for, of course, the Pope thinks that he ought to have the same "pastoral authority" in Ireland that he exercises in New Grenada.

We submit this to the consideration of Irish Roman Catholics, who are sincerely attached to civil and religious liberty. When the Synod of Thurles, and the Roman Catholic priests and bishops claim to have to themselves the management of education, under the direction of the Pope, let Roman Catholics remember how the Pope undertakes to abolish, in New Grenada, the constitution of that country, and the law of that land, by which "the right of free education is defended."

### THE TOUCHSTONE.

(Continued from page 9.)

**OBJECTION 33.**—Protestants deny that the pastors of the church have received from Christ the power of *remitting or retaining* sins, according to the state and disposition of the penitent.

Their Bible expressly affirms it (*John xx. 21, 22, 23*), where Christ tells his disciples—*As my Father hath sent me, even so I send you—Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.* Hence their *Common Prayer Book* expressly acknowledges, in the *Form of Absolution*, prescribed in the *Order for the Visitation of the Sick*, that our Lord Jesus Christ has left power to his church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in him.

**REPLY.**—It is generally agreed among Christians, of all denominations, that Christ's ministers are authorized and bound to proclaim that (as is expressed in the Church of England Prayer-book) "God pardoneth and absolveth all that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel." And it is also universally admitted that pardon is *not* promised to the ungodly and impenitent, whatever they may profess with their lips. Now, to know with perfect certainty which class each particular person belongs to—the sincere or the insincere—is plainly impossible, except to one who should possess the power of reading men's hearts, so as to judge of their most secret thoughts. And this power does not seem to have been bestowed even on the Apostles. For they seem not to have been aware (see *Acts viii.*) that Simon the sorcerer was "in the bond of iniquity," till he had betrayed his own corruption of heart. And, certainly, Christian pastors of these days possess no such power of reading men's thoughts. They can only, therefore, declare with complete certainty the general promise of divine pardon to all the penitent. And when any minister pronounces absolution on any particular person, he must be understood to speak not *absolutely*, but *conditionally*—i. e., on the supposition of the person's having in his heart that faith and penitence which he professes. To pardon the impenitent is what God has not promised to do, nor authorized any one to do.

All this relates, you will observe, to sins against God. As for any wrong done by one man to another, the person wronged has, of course, a right to forgive it absolutely. And Christians are exhorted to forgive injuries—meaning, of course, so far as regards the injuries done to themselves; for no one can have any right to pardon an offence done to another. So, also, a Church can pardon any offence done to that Church, as a society; and so may a State, or any other community, pardon a wrong done to that community. And when any act is done, which is both an offence against the church and also against an individual, and, moreover, a sin against God also, the individual has the power to forgive, as far as he individually is concerned; but he has no power to forgive the offence against the church unless the church authorizes him to do so; and the church, again, has power to forgive the wrong done to the church; but sin against God, no man, and no body of men, can have any right to forgive, unless they can show that God has conferred on them that power along with what is *essential* to the right exercise of it—the gift of "discerning spirits," reading men's inward thoughts, and judging with certainty as to their sincerity.

**OBJECTION 34.**—Protestants deny that a special confession of sins is prescribed in Scripture, or was practised by the primitive Christians in the Apostles' time.

Their Bible confutes both these assertions; the former (*James v. 16*)—*Confess your faults one to another*—

that is, to the priests, or *elders of the church*, of whom the Apostle was speaking in the foregoing verses. The latter (*Acts xix. 18*)—*Many that believed came and confessed, and showed their deeds.*

**REPLY.**—The passage here cited proves the very contrary of the conclusion it is brought to establish. For the very circumstance that the Apostle had just before been speaking of the Elders [the Christian Ministers] shows that he could not have been here alluding to a special confession of sins by the people to the elders; else he would have said—"confess your sins to them;" or "confess your sins to those elders;" instead of which, he says—"confess your sins one to another," which would just as much imply confessing to a layman as to a minister.

So also that passage in the Acts not only says nothing of private confession to any priest, but plainly shows that no such thing was enjoined to Christians; else it would not have been said that "many" believers made such a confession, but that *all* of them necessarily did so.

The passage seems to indicate that some of the converts had, in their heathen life, committed grievous sins; and that these came forward, on becoming Christians, to proclaim openly, before the whole congregation, their repentance and abhorrence of such sins.

As for the Apostle James's exhortation, it is given in general terms, and is left to be applied by each man according to the best of his conscientious judgment. For neither Protestants nor Roman Catholics understand, by confessing sins "one to another," that every one is to make a special confession of every one of his sins to everybody he meets.

1. But most Protestants would admit that one who is conscious of having wronged his neighbour ought to acknowledge to him that he has done so, and ask his pardon.

2. That it will often be useful to ask the advice of a sensible and pious friend, as to the best mode of breaking through some sinful habit, or of repairing some injury we may have done, or the like. And

3. That it may sometimes be advisable to warn a child, or a friend, against some temptation he may be exposed to, by telling him of the sin into which it may have formerly led ourselves.

But as for "special confession" to a priest, as a duty regularly required of every Christian, Protestants plainly see that if any such thing had been known in the times of the Apostles, it would have been clearly and expressly laid down, and strongly insisted on in their writings; and in these there is not even the least hint of it to be found.

**OBJECTION 35.**—Protestants deny that the church has received a power from Christ to grant indulgences or pardons, for releasing of punishment due to sin.

Their Bible affirms it (*Matt. xvi. 19*)—*I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.* Hence St. Paul (*2 Cor. ii. 10*) granted an indulgence to the incestuous Corinthian, forgiving him, as he expresses it, in the person of Christ.

**REPLY.**—Sins against God can be forgiven, it is plain, by God alone. And his pardon of all true penitents who trust in Christ, is proclaimed by all Protestant ministers. But they have not the power of so reading men's hearts as to know, with complete certainty, who are true penitents and sincere believers. Nor did even the Apostles possess this power; else they would have known the real character of Simon the sorcerer (see *Acts viii.*) before he betrayed his own wickedness.

But offences against a Church, that Church has (as we have said above) power to punish and to pardon. And, accordingly, every Protestant Church claims the right to exclude from the Lord's table, or to expel altogether from the community those who scandalize the congregation by gross wickedness of life; and again, on their submitting and reforming their life, to re-admit them.

This you may see (among other places) in the Rubric prefixed to the communion service of the Church of England.\*

\* "So many as intend to be partakers of the Holy Communion shall signify their names to the Curate, at least some time the day before; and if any of them be an open and notorious evil doer, or have done any wrong to his neighbours by word or deed, so that the congregation be thereby offended, the curate having knowledge thereof, shall call and advertise him, that in any wise he presume not to come to the Lord's table, until he hath openly declared himself to have truly repented, and mended his former naughty life, that the congregation may thereby be satisfied, which before were offended; and that he hath recompensed the parties to whom he hath done wrong, or at least declare himself to be in full purpose so to do, as soon as he conveniently may. The same order shall the curate use with those betwixt whom he perceiveth malice and hatred to reign, not suffering them to be partakers of the Lord's table, until he know them to be reconciled. And if any of the parties so at variance be content to forgive, from the bottom of his heart, all that the other hath trespassed against him, and to make amends, for that he himself hath offended, and the other party will not be persuaded to a godly unity, but remain still in his forwardness and malice, the minister, in that case, ought to admit the penitent person to the Holy Communion, and not him that is obstinate. Provided that every minister so repelling any, as is specified in this or the next precedent paragraph of this Rubric, shall be obliged to give an account of the same to the ordinary within fourteen days after at the farthest. And the ordinary shall proceed against those offending according to the Canon—Book of Common Prayer."

But as for punishments or pardons in the next world, these must, of course, be left altogether in the hands of the ALL-WISE, who alone can read men's hearts. As for "binding" and "loosing," these were, and, indeed, still are, the words in common use among the Jews to denote the establishing, and the annulling, of any regulation or ordinance.

And, accordingly, the Church of England exercises the right of making, and of altering, from time to time, regulations for the conducting of divine worship, for the admitting of ministers, &c. But she does not presumptuously take upon her to set forth any doctrines not contained in Scripture (such as purgatory, or the invocation of departed saints, &c.), nor to introduce any practices contrary to Scripture, such as altering the original institution of the Lord's Supper, by administering the bread without the wine, &c.

**OBJECTION 36.**—Protestants reject *extreme unction*—that is, the anointing of the sick; and deny that there is any promise of grace in Scripture to those that receive it.

Their Bible, in plain and express terms, recommends this sacrament, with a promise of grace to such as receive it (*St. James v. 14, 15*)—*Is any sick among you, let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and, if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.*

**REPLY.**—Protestants, it is true, do not pretend to the gift of miraculously healing the sick, which is evidently what the Apostle is speaking of. No more do the Roman Catholic priests; for they administer their "extreme unction" without any hope of being able to "raise up" the sick man; and, indeed, only when they believe him to be past recovery.

But in the days of the Apostles there were many who had the gift of miraculously curing the sick; and among other sick persons thus cured there were, doubtless, some of those who had been afflicted with sickness as an extraordinary and special chastisement for certain sins.—See *1 Cor. v. 5*, and *xi. 3*.

As for the so-called sacrament of unction, as practised in the Church of Rome, for the supposed benefit of the dying, there is no trace in Scripture of any such thing.\*

**OBJECTION 37.**—Protestants deny that there is any grace given by the imposition, or laying on of the bishop's hands in holy orders.

Their Bible declares that there is, in the words of St. Paul to Timothy, whom he had ordained (*2 Tim. i. 6*)—*Stir up the gift of God which is in thee, by the putting on of my hands.*

**REPLY.**—It is very strange that any writer should either be so ignorant himself, or should so calculate on the ignorance of his readers, as to put forth such a statement. Any Roman Catholic who may wish to know how much truth there is in it, has only to attend and witness the public ordination of ministers in any Protestant Church; or to read for himself the Ordination Service in the Prayer-book of the Church of England.

**OBJECTION 38.**—Protestants commonly teach, that priests, and other religious persons that have vowed continency, may nevertheless marry, as Luther and the first reformers did; and that it is not damnable to them to break their faith given to God.

Their Bible tells them, that to break such a vow, made to God, is sinful and damnable (*Deut. xxiii. 21, 22, 23*)—*When thou shalt vow a vow unto the Lord thy God, thou shalt not be slack to pay it; for the Lord thy God will surely require it of thee, and it would be sin in thee. But, if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee. That which is gone out of thy lips, thou shalt keep and perform.* And *1 Tim. v. 11, 12*, where St. Paul, speaking of widows that are for marrying, after having made such a vow, says, they have damnation, because they have cast off their first faith.

**REPLY.**—Whatever may be thought of the lawfulness or propriety of vows under the Christian dispensation, yet, probably, all persons, of whatever persuasion, will admit that a vow, contract, or engagement, of whatever kind, is not binding on a person who has been tricked into it by false representations, as to the very matter relating to that engagement.

If, for instance, some one is induced to promise to vote, or to act in a certain way, by being assured that such is the desire of his father, or some one else whom he highly venerates; and if he afterwards discovers, and can prove, that this assurance is false, and that the reverse is the fact, most people would allow that such a promise is not binding.

So, also, if any one has been brought up in ignorance of what Scripture contains, and in a belief of what is contrary to Scripture, and has been thus seduced into making some rash vow, and afterwards finds that he has been imposed on, and that it will be more conducive to his leading a Christian life to depart from that engagement than to keep to it, in such a case he ought not to

\* We beg to refer such of our readers as are desirous of knowing more upon this subject, to the article on the novelty of the doctrine of Extreme Unction, in our number for August, 1852.—CATHOLIC LAYMAN, 1st vol., p. 85.